

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency
100 USDA, Suite 102
Stillwater, OK 74074-2653

OK Notice IRM-305

For: County Offices

Internet and Electronic Mail Policy Overview

Approved by: State Executive Director



1 Overview

**A
Background**

Farm Service Agency Internet and electronic mail policy was originally published in Notice IRM-306. The Kansas City Security Office (KCSO) issued an overview of the policy, which was provided to County Offices in OK Notice IRM-290.

**B
Purpose**

The purpose of this notice is to reissue a copy of KCSO's policy overview (Exhibit 1).

2 Action

**A
County**

A copy of this notice and exhibit shall be provided to every FSA employee for review.

Disposal

December 31, 2003

Distribution

County Offices

IRM NOTICE-306 FFAS INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC MAIL (E-MAIL) POLICY OVERVIEW

<i>Commonly Asked Questions</i>	<i>Guidelines To Follow</i>	<i>General Comments</i>
1. May I use a private Internet Service Provider (ISP) like AT&T or AOL from my office work station to access the Internet during business hours or on my own time?	No. All access to the Internet must be through the USDA Internet Access Network. No private Internet Service Providers like AOL are allowed.	Provisions have been established for special testing scenarios at development centers of WEB pages. However, a waiver from the Security Office to the Department is required.
2. What type of equipment does IRM Notice 306 address?	Telephones facsimile machines, electronic messaging, computer equipment E-mail and the Internet.	
3. Do I need any special permission to use government equipment for limited personal use on my own time?	Yes. Employees must request "limited use access" from their immediate supervisor for specific time frames, such as before or after work and or during specified lunch periods and or breaks to use the Internet for personal use. The supervisor can approve or deny the request.	It's the supervisor's decision if they want the request verbally or in writing. The limited personal usage must comply with the intent of IRM Notice 306. Supervisors should make sure that all employees and contractors have access to this IRM Notice and are strongly encouraged to read it.
4. May I use government owned equipment any time I want after hours for limited personal usage?	No. If employees choose to use government equipment before and/or after work hours, it should conform to reasonable building opening and closing timeframes to insure all building security regulations are followed and the Government incurs no additional cost. For example, if the normal business hours of operation at the employees workplace are from 6 am to 8 PM, it is not reasonable to allow employees to come in earlier than 6 AM or stay later than 8 PM just to use government equipment for limited personal use.	Building or separate offices that have 24 hours guard services would follow normal building security regulations of signing in and out after hours. Most Government Offices have posted standard business hours of operation. Use of government equipment outside these hours is by permission only. Union agreements clearly define normal government business hours for a standard workday.
5. May my immediate family members or friends use the government equipment after hours?	No. Only Federal employees and assigned contractors are allowed to use government equipment for limited personal use.	
6. May contractors use government equipment for limited personal use?	Yes. Contractors are governed by the same set of rules as Government employees. However, prior permission for use must come from the COR or COTR that they are governed by.	The letter of the contract and statement of work is always the determining factor for contractors and this privilege will be disallowed if so stated in the contract language.

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7. What are some specific things that I cannot do while using the Internet or E-mail for limited personal use.	<p>Some examples of items that you cannot do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • run a private business • using the equipment as a staging ground or platform to gain unauthorized access to other systems • creating, copying, transmitting, or retransmitting chain letters or other mass mailings regardless of subject matter • soliciting, advertising or selling items like E-bay or running a Real-estate office • send electronic messages containing discriminatory language or remarks that may constitute sexual harassment • use of sexually explicit materials or remarks that ridicule other coworkers on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, sex, handicap, national origin or sexual orientation • earn outside income • cause congestion, delay or disruption of services to any government systems or equipment such as sending Greeting cards, videos, sound, or other large file attachments 	There are several obvious things for which government equipment should not be used. However, much of the prohibited areas are a matter of common sense.
8. Can anyone see what I am doing when I send E-mail messages or use the Internet?	<p>Yes. Monitoring tools are in place for Security and Telecommunication administrators to monitor all access to the Internet and E-mail.</p> <p>By using this office equipment, consent to monitoring and using this office equipment implies with or without cause, including but not limited to accessing the Internet and e-mail systems recording.</p>	USDA DR 3300-1 states those employees and contractors do not have a right, nor should they have an expectation, of privacy while using Government office equipment at any time.
9. May I bring games (CD's or diskettes) from home?	No. Playing games in the workplace during or after business hours is prohibited.	You can bring Music CD's from home and play at work as long as the noise does not disrupt the workplace or other employees. Earphone/headsets are strongly encouraged.

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10. May I download games from the Internet and play them?	<p>No. You may not load games on your hard drive of your PC anytime. Playing games on-line is prohibited.</p> <p>In addition, creating, downloading, viewing, storing, copying or transmitting materials related to illegal gambling, illegal weapons, terrorists activities and any other illegal activities are strictly prohibited.</p>	<p>Loading 'non-standard' software on any Government PC can raise questions of compatibility. Your software can conflict with one or more Government applications and cause PC and/or network problems. The presence of non-standard software on a PC makes Tech support difficult if not impossible.</p>
11. May I make personal banking transactions using the Internet on my own time?	<p>Yes. If your bank has a WEB site that can be accessed online, you may make normal banking transactions that you normally would be allowed to do by phone.</p>	<p>You must obtain limited user access permission from your supervisor.</p> <p>You cannot load banking software on your PC.</p>
12. May I use government equipment on my own time to copy special flyers for charitable clubs or non-profit organizations that I belong to such as, Scouts, School or PTA, or for my own home use?	<p>Yes. You may make a very limited number of copies of documents as long as these clubs or events are non-profit and no service fee is being charged.</p> <p>USDA sponsored or work sponsored teams such as USDA bowling and/or golf leagues can use government equipment to print documents after hours as long as you are not being paid a salary for performing this activity.</p> <p>Also, there must be minimal additional expense to the Government.</p> <p>The intent is not for the Government to subsidize printing cost for non-business related ventures of any kind</p>	<p>You cannot store these personal files on government equipment.</p> <p>Personal diskettes should be personally procured and virus checking on diskettes needs to be completed prior to using.</p> <p>You should obtain limited user access permission from your supervisor.</p>
13. May I buy and sell stock on-line on my own time?	<p>No. Telecommunications resources and official time shall not be used to earn outside income. Therefore, these types of activities cannot be performed during working or non-work hours.</p> <p>However, you can make changes on line to TSP accounts.</p>	<p>The intent of this privilege is to allow some limited management of your personal TSP retirement funds and was not intended to support daily stock trading.</p>

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14. May I use government equipment to print special documents for sports teams and other for-profit clubs that I belong to?	No. The intent is not for the Government to subsidize printing cost for non-business related ventures of any kind	See item 12 above.
15. Will I get in trouble if I violate these regulations identified in IRM Notice 306?	Yes. Up to and including dismissal depending on the severity of the offense.	The immediate supervisor with input and guidance from Personnel Division Employee Relation Specialists decides punishment.
16. What are the rules for downloading software from the Internet?	Downloading software is not permitted whether it's free or not. You cannot download software from the Internet or bring software in from outside of USDA that violates the copyright on the software and/or makes FSA liable for violation of the Copyright Act.	You cannot use sites like bluemountain.com to receive birthday and get well cards from employees or friends. You can send these types of cards to non-government employees and friends.
17. May I use the telephone for personal business?	Yes. Limited personal use is allowed as long as it does not generate more than minimal expense to the Government.	Long distance personal calls are prohibited. Length of calls should be kept at a minimum.
18. Are personal E-mail messages allowed to be sent and received at work?	Yes. You can send and receive E-mail messages within reason to and from non-business addresses. However, you are not allowed to establish personal E-mail accounts at work using Hotmail, Yahoo etc.	You are not allowed to forward your personal ISP E-mail to your government E-mail account. All E-mail, both business related and personal, would be stored and backed up nightly on the Agency network.
19. May I customize my Wallpaper on my PC?	Yes. Changing wallpaper is not considered to be a configuration change. However, employees are guided by the code of ethics and conduct and must adhere to all policies regarding offensive materials in the workplace.	Pictures of family, animals, and other normal acceptable business office type pictures are ok. Pictures of scantily clad male or females or other pictures covered under sexual harassment policy are prohibited. See your supervisor for final determinations. Supervisor will direct the users to remove inappropriate or offensive wallpaper immediately from all government equipment.

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20. May I download Screensavers from the Internet or bring a CD of Screensavers from home and load it on my PC or laptop?	No. You may not download screensavers or any other file from the Internet. However, you may capture any appropriate graphic image for use as a screen saver or wallpaper from non-government sources within the guidelines of item 19 above.	Installing screen saver is considered a configuration change to the equipment and is known to cause resource problems.
21. Can I use the FAX machine for personal use?	Yes. Within common sense and limited boundaries, you can send a fax to local numbers for personal business.	You should obtain limited user access permission from your supervisor.
22. Can I read such things as the newspaper, check the weather, look at new car web sites, and other non-restrictive sites on the Internet on my own time?	Yes. You can also access magazines and other reference materials not blocked or identified as offensive. You can research and review any business-related materials on the Internet during work hours as directed by your supervisor.	You must obtain limited user access permission from your supervisor for non-business related usage.
23. Is the Agency looking at new technology on the Internet like allowing parents at work to use the Internet to check on their children at daycare?	Yes. A number of day care centers have installed Cameras that are connected to the Internet to allow parents to observe their children during the day from their work computers as part of the (family friendly Initiative).	Employees would be allowed to check on children using the Internet once or twice a day, but should not leave this connection continuously open on their desktops. These types of Web Sites are major resource hogs and can easily overburden a network if they are kept up continuously. You should obtain limited user access permission from your supervisor.
24. IRM Notice 306 talks about using the Internet during non-business hours. What about using the Internet during business hours for non-business related purposes?	This is a performance issue and not a security issue. Supervisors assign daily work and monitor target dates. If employees are current on their work assignments, then, using the Internet to research and self teach the employee on its capabilities would be acceptable.	You should obtain limited user access permission from your supervisor. It's the supervisor's decision to decide if you are not performing due to wasted time using the Internet. So keeping them informed is strongly suggested.

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<i>Commonly Asked Questions</i>	<i>Guidelines To Follow</i>	<i>General Comments</i>
25. If I have specific questions on Security related issues, who should I call for clarification?	Please contact your local State Office or Headquarters security office. All official security policies and regulations are issued by the WDC Security Office and enforced by the KC Security Office.	Each State Office should identify an onsite security official and a backup to address security related issues and to coordinate responses with Headquarters as needed. Violations should be reported to the onsite security officer, who in turn would coordinate with Headquarters security and personnel specialists.

This short overview is intended for managers and supervisors and employees to use as a guideline for managing and enforcing IRM Notice 306. It is not intended to override or replace this Notice. It also is not intended to override or replace the 5 CFR 2635 Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch handbook.

It should be used as more of a question and answer type document to help clarify the intentions of this IRM Notice 306. As a reminder, users should be aware that personal information that transverses the Internet and Intranet is not secure and data integrity cannot be guaranteed.

Also, the Government is not responsible in any fashion for personal data that is "sniffed" from the Internet or the Intranet and used for unauthorized personal gain or embarrassment to the user. Users use the Internet at their own risk for personal business.